

Introduction

The NC ECHO Dublin Core Implementation Guidelines seek to assist North Carolina institutions in creating practical and useful in-house rules for constructing Dublin Core metadata records. NC ECHO has adopted Dublin Core because it adequately describes resources found in the library, archival, museum, and other cultural heritage institutions that form the collective NC ECHO community. The standard is open and amenable to involving all of these communities, without excluding groups of users. These guidelines and best practices are based upon the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative's discourse on the Dublin Core metadata standard. These guidelines are designed to be helpful to institutions as they are creating Dublin Core applications; however, they are not meant to give an institution a direct interpretation of their digital materials. Rather, these guidelines provide an easy Dublin Core framework for institutions to apply to their specific uses. The guidelines are necessarily broad to allow application across a variety of types of institutions that will use them – libraries, archives, museums, historic sites, etc.

Dublin Core represents the lowest common denominator for creating metadata to facilitate maximum accessibility of resources across a broad spectrum of institution types. Format-specific metadata standards exist that may be more appropriate for an institution's digital material. Institutions are encouraged to use other metadata systems as appropriate. Crosswalking (mapping from one metadata system to another) helps to provide multiple metadata expressions for digital objects. However, it is recommended that in envisioning a crosswalking system, Dublin Core be generated from the more specific standard rather than mapping the other way. This is a logical way to proceed as Dublin Core is more general than most other standards. These other standards either have established or have in-process interpretations for North Carolina, and the crosswalks are embedded in all standards produced.

Purpose and Scope

These best practices offer assistance in creating metadata records for digitized resources, including those that are born digital as well as those that are reformatted from existing physical resources (photographs, text, audio, video, three-dimensional artifacts, etc). Creators of these metadata records may include catalogers, curators, archivists, librarians, web site developers, database administrators, volunteers, and other persons working in cultural heritage institutions. Application of these best practices in the creation of metadata records will result in standardized records that:

- enhance online search and retrieval accuracy in a shared search environment (NC ECHO), as well as local search solutions;
- improve resource discovery capabilities;
- improve quality control of metadata records;
- facilitate inter-institutional interoperability.

This document uses the Dublin Core element set as defined by the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI), <http://www.dublincore.org/>.

Because it addresses a diverse audience of cultural heritage institutions comprised of museums, libraries, historical societies, archives, etc., this document seeks to accommodate different backgrounds and metadata skill levels by explaining terms and concepts as needed and by providing examples describing diverse resources. Terminology can often be confusing in creating these kinds of guidelines, so where possible terms have been defined, and a supplementary glossary is included. In addition, a great deal of literature regarding the Dublin Core metadata standard has been generated, and a Resources section provides a list of some of the most